

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Bureau of Customs and Border Protection

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2003

El Paso Sector Agents Make Multiple Marijuana and Cocaine Seizures in west Texas and New Mexico

Agents in Alamogordo and Fort Hancock Seize Narcotics in Five Incidents

EL PASO, Texas --Border Patrol Agents in Fort Hancock, Texas, and Las Cruces, New Mexico, seized more than 2,279 pounds of marijuana and 52 pounds of cocaine, valued at \$3.8 million, over a span of the past week.

Three of the five documented seizures were made by agents in Fort Hancock. Two of those seizures were made at separate times and locations approximately one mile from the Fort Hancock Port of Entry (POE). Agents located 1,100 pounds in a Chevrolet pickup Friday morning after the driver attempted to elude authorities on Interstate 10 (I-10). Agents ultimately used tire deflation devices to disable the truck on a farm road. Agents located several bundles of marijuana in a tool box and cab of the truck.

Saturday, agents located 450 pounds of marijuana in the same vicinity near Fort Hancock after agents watched as a group of seven subjects crossed the border from Mexico. As agents approached the area, the subjects fled back to Mexico, leaving behind seven burlap bundles filled with marijuana. The confiscated contraband was turned over to the Hudspeth County Sheriff's Office for disposition.

A third seizure in Fort Hancock occurred Sunday when 51 packages of marijuana wrapped in brown tape were found in a 1985 Toyota dual wheel truck being pulled by a tow truck five miles west of Fort Hancock POE. Agents discovered footprints and tire tracks at the initial location and made a determination of the type of tires found at that location. A search of the area led agents to a tow truck in Fort Hancock that was pulling the Toyota that had tires that matched the general description lookout. Further observation by agents appeared to indicate possible "alterations" in the bottom of the truck's bed. A vehicle stop was then made on the tow truck generating more suspicion by agents who observed unusual mannerisms being displayed by the driver and two occupants. After gaining consent to search the truck, agents found a false compartment under the bed of the truck. Inside the compartment, agents found 729 pounds of marijuana. The three male subjects, one border crossing card holder and two U.S. Citizens, were turned over to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) with the contraband and vehicles.

In Las Cruces, agents at the I-25 traffic checkpoint made two cocaine seizures on March 24 and 28, 2003. The 44 pounds of cocaine were located in a 2002 Cadillac Escalade. The contraband was located after agents noticed alterations in the license plate area.

After granting consent to search, a canine alerted on the utility vehicle. Further investigation by agents uncovered fresh alterations in the floor of the vehicle which ultimately led to a false door. The false door led to a stash of cocaine hidden in the gas tank. The value of the narcotics is estimated at \$1.4 million.

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A second cocaine seizure was also made on March 28, 2003 at the same Las Cruces checkpoint. A total of 8.3 pounds of cocaine was found wrapped in aluminum duct tape in a 1992 Nissan Sentra. Once again, agents noticed fresh alterations made in the trunk area. The driver gave consent to have a canine inspect the vehicle. The dog alerted on the Nissan. Further investigation led agents to the gas tank area that contained the cocaine. The value of that load of cocaine is estimated at \$268,000. One U.S. Citizen from Detroit, Michigan was turned over to DEA in Las Cruces with the contraband and vehicle.

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